

to be brought and bade them wash their hands. The boys, from habit, at once put their hands in the water, the girls stopped to turn back their sleeves.

**4. And the house he had built.** Not the temple but the royal palace. This is evident from the details which follow. For a description of the house, see chap. 7, 1-12.

**5. The meat of his table.** "Food" would be a better translation than "meat." The original word means that which is eaten, or any kind of food.

**The sitting of his servants.** Not slaves, or ordinary servants, but rather officers of high rank, especially ministers of state and those engaged in military affairs. (See Gen. 40, 20, and 1 Sam. 29, 5.)

**And the attendance of his ministers.** These were the waiters or the servants in attendance upon the royal guests. Notice that the margin, which is quite literal, gives "standing" and not "attendance." The sitting of the first class of servants and the standing of the second gives a key to the meaning. **And their apparel.** It was customary in the East, and is to this day, for the king or even for persons of high rank to furnish robes for the invited guests. (See Esther 6, 8; Dan, 5, 7.)

**And his ascent.** The word rendered "ascent" may possibly mean "burnt offering," as in the margin of the Revised Version. It is, however, difficult to see why we should have such a sudden transition from a description of the palace to that of a religious ceremony at the temple. The parallel passage in 2 Chron. 9, 4 cannot be made to mean burnt offering. What this ascent was can only be an object of conjecture. The following from Keil is as probable as any: "*Olutha* (ascent) is most likely 'the king's outer entrance' into the temple mentioned in 2 Kings 16, 18; and the passage before us would lead us to suppose that this was a work of art, or an artistic arrangement." **There was no more spirit in her.** She became discouraged, she lost spirit, and had to acknowledge her inferiority to the great Hebrew philosopher and most powerful monarch. The word rendered "spirit" is often translated "breath," and might be so rendered here. Compare our common phrase, "Take away one's breath."

**6. It was a true report,** etc. The nobility of her character appears here to a great advantage. It requires real greatness to see the superiority of a rival, and a great deal more of it to acknowledge the same. **Of thine acts.** The margin gives "saying" which is a literal translation of the Hebrew. Nevertheless, it is very difficult often to distinguish between acts and words, as the expression used seems to suggest both to the Hebrews. But as the word "wisdom" is used in immediate connection, it is probable that the original word translated "acts" refers to the parks, gardens, and various public buildings so famous in Solomon's time.

**7. Thy wisdom and prosperity exceed-**

**eth the fame.** This is a free rendering of the Hebrew; a more literal translation would run thus: "Thou hast added wisdom and material prosperity to the report which I heard."

**8. Happy are thy men.** The word rendered "happy" here is the same as that translated "blessed" in Psalm 1, 1, and often. It is a noun in the plural form, which makes it very emphatic in Hebrew, but cannot be literally reproduced into idiomatic English; for it would not do to translate it, "O the blessednesses," etc. "How supremely happy" would fairly represent the original conception. The Septuagint, Arabic, and Syriac, as well as many commentators, render the clause, "Happy are thy women," that is, wives. Since we have servants in the next clause there is much to be said in favor of this reading. Moreover, there is only a difference of one letter, and that a silent one, between the two readings.

**9. Blessed be the Lord thy God.** The word translated "Lord" is Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel. The expression seems strange in the mouth of this heathen queen. The older theologians concluded from this fact that she had become a convert to Judaism, and was a worshiper of Jehovah. Such reasoning, however, is not entirely logical, for nothing would have been easier for a polytheist than to acknowledge in addition to her own god or gods Jehovah the God of Israel. As Lamby has said: "It could not matter, in the mind of the heathen queen, whether she included one divinity more or less in the number of those she honored." **Because the Lord loved Israel forever.** Whether or not she worshiped Jehovah, she fully believed that Solomon was his representative on earth. The divine right and appointment of kings was fully and everywhere taught in all oriental countries. The language in 2 Chron. 9, 8, which see, differs quite a little.

**10. Hundred and twenty talents of gold.** It is impossible to tell the exact value of a talent of gold or of silver in our money. It is now generally supposed that a gold talent consisted of three thousand shekels; a shekel of gold was worth between ten and eleven dollars; thus the whole sum would be somewhere between three and four millions of dollars. Eastern princes and rulers vied with one another in making large presents, and do so to this day. As every oriental expects about as much in return as he gives, the whole affair assumes almost a purely business character. (See v. 13.) The reader will have observed that Hiram also gave Solomon the same number of talents. (See chap. 9, 14.) **Of spices very great store, and of precious stones.** (See notes on verse 2, above.)

#### Orientalisms of the Lesson.

Solomon's greatness and dominion impressed oriental lands. Solomon is evidently alluded to in the Persian king Artaxerxes's answer, "These

have been ruled over and tribute and

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